Tracer
The McHenry County Historical Society's Quarterly Magazine
ENJOYED BY OUR MEMBERS FOR 50 YEARS
2018 - VOLUME 4

Tom Hare sits inside his 1940 Ford Coupe that he purchased and drove in high school and has since refurbished outside of his mountain cabin in Madison County. The lesson? Never take things at face value.

Photos by Angeli Wright, courtesy of the Asheville Citizen-Times

MacGyering his way:

Crystal Lake native brings innovation, mechanical wherewithal to N.C. mountains

By JOHN HEISLER and KURT BEGALKA

Crystal Lake native Tom Hare tackled the renovation of his abandoned 1903 cabin in North Carolina with his typical mix of aplomb, street smarts and MacGyver-like ingenuity.

Abandoned in the 1950s, the one-bedroom home at one time accommodated a family with 10 children – almost as many years (15) that it's taken him to restore the 1,694-square-foot house to a vintage, 1930s-'40s era – Hare's era.

"I'm from the '40s. My coupe is from the '40s. It's everything I have," Hare said.

After peeling off the tarpaper and removing the boards and metal that covered the rotting windows, Hare discovered three layers – each board an inch thick and a foot wide – of "wormy chestnut" siding cladding the exterior.

"This old house was built when chestnut trees were growing. It was Mother Nature's wonder wood," Hare said.

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The Tracer is a quarterly publication carrying local history topics, news and information for members of the McHenry County Historical Society.

Our museum is located between Routes 20 and 176, at 6422 Main Street in Union, Illinois

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1 to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, third Saturdays

McHenry County Historical Society members enjoy FREE admission.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

We engage and educate current and future generations by preserving and sharing McHenry County history.

(An Illinois Not-for-profit 501c3 Corporation)

We Appreciate Our Members!

President's Column

Thank you for the year that was

As the year closes, I have to reflect on the amazing amount of work that was accomplished this year at the Society.

The board along with staff worked through StEPs a museum self-assessment program. This process helped us to identify areas of improvement and work toward specific goals. Through the StEPs program we recognized the need to update our strategic plan which had been approved by the board in 2015. New board member Catherine Jones, along with the strategic planning committee, will be leading this initiative.

In 2018 we also initiated a renovation of our rotating exhibit space, previously located on the second floor. After an extensive move and rehousing of artifacts offsite, Chicago Exhibits erected new walls and installed track lighting in the southeast corner of Eckert Hall. Currently, the walls have been painted and Exhibits Curator Kira Stell is beginning to organize the new space for its grand opening in late spring. Additionally, new modular wall partitions were added between the exhibit space and stage.

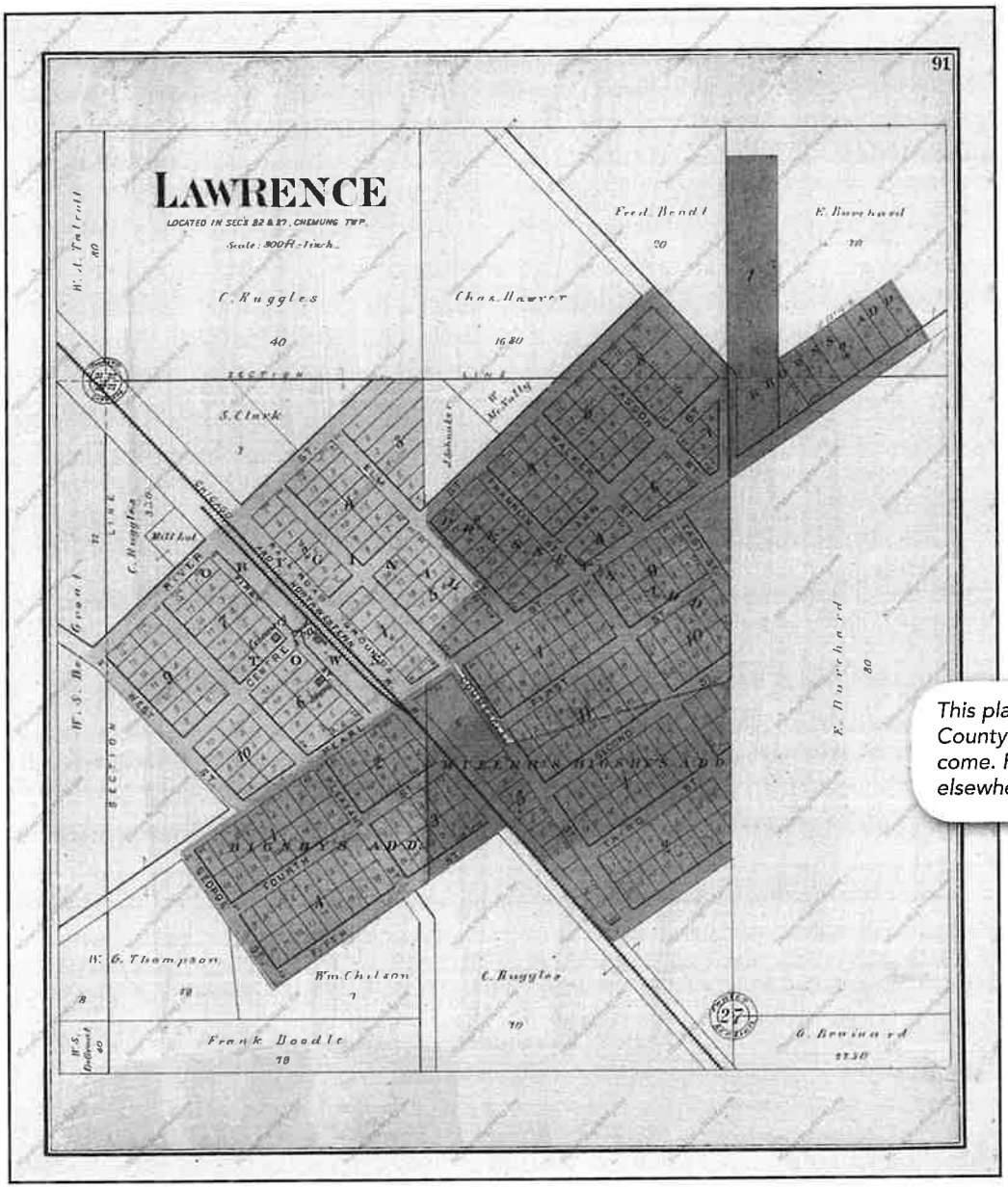
New, space-saving comfortable seating will be added and ready for the Sampler Series. We are excited to show our members and the public our new exhibit and program space.

These two major initiatives, along with the innumerable other projects completed this past year, would not have been completed without our dedicated staff, board, volunteers and donors. My thanks to everyone for their commitment to preserving and sharing McHenry County history for current and future generations. The commitment to preserving McHenry County history for future generations is at the heart of our mission. If you would like to learn more about leaving a legacy gift to the Society, contact Administrator Kurt Begalka or consult your financial adviser.

In this season of giving, please remember that our utility fund is a critical way we are able to keep up with ongoing expenses so that admission and membership costs can remain low. Your donation will help keep our buildings warm and lit for visitors to discover the wonder of history. Donations can be made through our website https://mchenrycountyhistory.org/ or by mailing a check to 6422 Main St., Union, IL 60180.

Wishing you all a joyous holiday.

With gratitude,
Mary K. Ott, president



This plat, from the 1892 McHenry County Atlas, shows a community on the come. However, when the railroad went elsewhere the population soon followed.

Ghost Towns of McHenry County:

Lawrence, Illinois: A founder's dream derailed when tracks headed to Harvard

By CRAIG L. PFANNKUCHE

A fallen obelisk once lay covered with brambles in a forgotten cemetery situated in the middle of a cornfield, a couple of miles to the northwest of Harvard. Barely seen on one side of that obelisk was the inscription "Lawrence Bigsby, died April 23, 1855, age 55y, 6m, 19 d."

Lawrence was the founder and namesake of a McHenry County community in Chemung Township that once held great promise. Who was he? Why would he have plopped a town plat down in the middle of a wide prairie? Why did he ever think that an important community would grow there?

A son of Jonathan and Catherine Turner Bigsby, Lawrence Bigsby was born in Columbia County, N.Y. in October 1799. It may be that the death of his mother. a short time later, prompted the family to move west. While his father remained in DuPage County, Lawrence took his wife, Mary, and their son, Henry, farther west. Accompanied by Lawrence's brother, Charles, they likely used the Native American route – called the Big Foot Trail by white settlers – which today approximates Route 14. From Crystal Lake they headed west until they found unclaimed land traversed by a steam.

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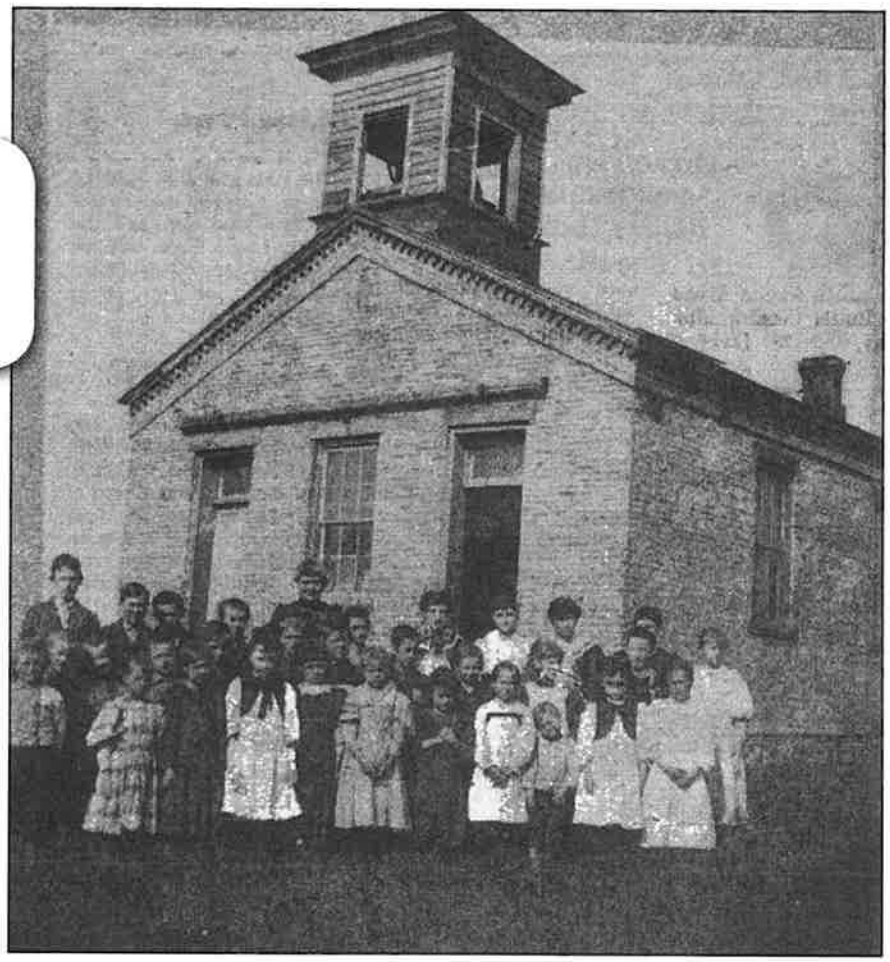

Lawrence School, built around 1860, at the corner of Oak Grove and Lawrence roads. Converted into a private home after it closed in 1948, it fell victim to technological progress. A gas pipeline undermined the building's foundation and prompted its removal.

That creek eventually would be named the Piskasaw.

A strong continuous stream of water was a necessity for early settlers. Not only did the trees along its banks provide fuel and construction material, but the waters might be dammed to provide power for saw and grist mills. Both were essential for permanent settlement and the rising land values that often accompanied it.

The 1839 General Land Office map of Chemung Township shows the area of what was to become Lawrence to be in a kind of peninsula of woodland, with well-watered prairie to the north and south. By then the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 27 already had been settled, as a bit of plowed land is shown on the map. In fact, Henry Whitlock was farming those 80 acres as early as the summer of 1833.

Bigsby reported his claim at the Federal Land Claims Office in Chicago. The property located on the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 27 in what would become Chemung Township. Henry filed his claim in June 1846 while his mother filed in October 1847. Charles filed in April 1848 but left for Iowa shortly afterwards.

In the summer of 1848, a momentous event occurred in Chicago which would play a critical role in the history of Lawrence. At that time, the first railroad train from Chicago chugged out of the Galena and Chicago Union railroad's Kinzie Street station (at Canal Street) on its way to Oak Park carrying company stockholders. On it's return, an Oak Park farmer was convinced to ship a load of wheat into the city instead of it being hauled by wagon. It was the beginning of Chicago as the heart of North American railroading.

Within just a year or so, William Butler Ogden, who had been the vital leading force behind the railroad endeavor, was unceremoniously dumped from the presidency of the G&CU. Convinced that even more railroads were a necessity for the area (which would dramatically increase the value of his Chicago property holdings), Ogden proposed the building of another line, the Chicago, St. Paul and Fond du Lac, to serve the area northwest of the city (and Fond du Lac, Wis., where Ogden owned large tracks of forest land). As that road's surveyors crossed the prairies of McHenry County searching for the best rights-of-way, Bigsby saw a major opportunity. He convinced the surveyors that, in return for allowing the railroad free right of way across his land, the railroad would build a station there.

With nearby woodlands to be cut for fuel and with water easily available, he hoped that the railroad would want to build a fueling station on his property. That would translate into jobs and more settlers to buy lots in the village he proposed to develop. With a wood-fueling stop located at Ridgefield, the mileage to the next fueling stop most likely would be Bigsby's proposed village location.

Excitement at the prospect of a railroad in the township increased dramatically and Bigsby laid out a village plat on both sides of the proposed railroad, modestly calling the village "Lawrence." In March 1856 Mary Bigsby finalized the sale of land for the right-of-way to the Fond du Lac line and the railroad built a station on the west side of the track in the center of the newly platted community, and opened it for business.

Soon the sounds of carpentry resonated through the village. Four stores, a hotel and a tavern quickly were erected along with a number of homes along Centre Street. People from all over the area began to contemplate moving to the increasingly prosperous community.

There was talk that the railroad wanted to set up a roundhouse, repair shops and large fueling facilities on the edge of town, which would provide many well-paying jobs. But the railroad did not settle its facilities there. Local legend has it that other farmers in the nearby area did not have Bigsby's foresight. It is said that they held out for land sale

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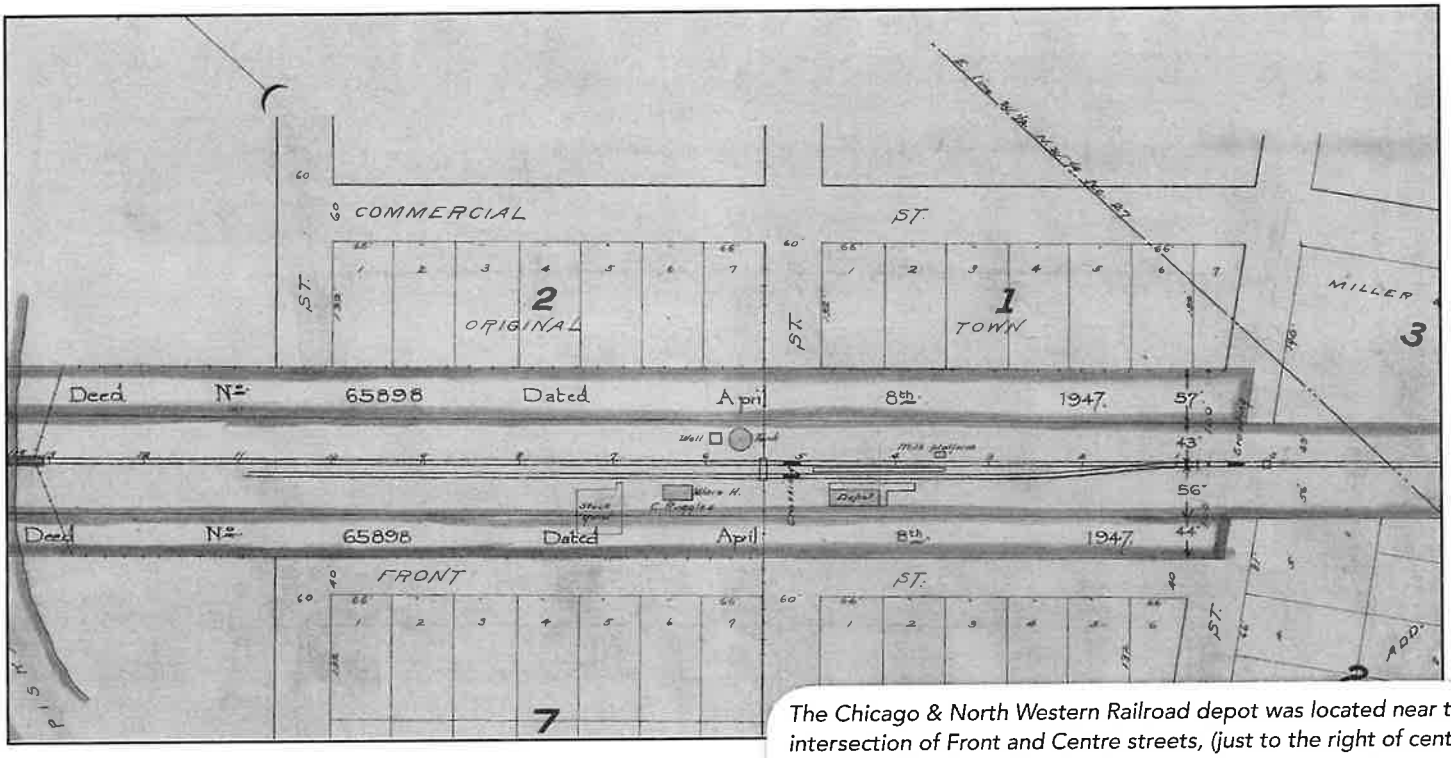

The Chicago & North Western Railroad depot was located near the intersection of Front and Centre streets, (just to the right of center) as pictured in these blueprints from the C&NW Historical Society archives

prices which the railroad could not afford so the railroad opted not to locate its fueling station and repair shops there.

Legend has it that Elbridge Gerry Ayer willingly provided free land to the Fond du Lac Railroad where the railroad's roundhouse, repair shops and car yards could be built, while platting the city of Harvard – which is why the railroad located there instead of at Lawrence.

While it probably is true that Ayer did donate land to the railroad for facility construction, it most certainly also is true that Ayer – an early and very successful merchant in Kenosha, Wis. between 1837 and 1847 – had become very interested in the construction of a railroad from Kenosha westward toward Beloit, Wis. In 1847 he moved to Big Foot on the Illinois/ Wisconsin line, where he traded in wheat destined for the Kenosha market.

In an effort to ease transportation of that wheat, Ayer embraced railroad construction westward through the area. He also was aware that Ogden's Chicago St. Paul and Fond du Lac Railroad was building toward the northwest. The two roads had to cross somewhere, and investment was sure to follow! Drastic increase in land values and tremendous opportunities for merchants and grain dealers were a given.

A glance at the United States Geological Survey's topographical maps of the area between Genoa City, Wis. and Harvard clearly shows why a rail line from Kenosha to Rockford (a critical destination for the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad as it passed through Marengo) would have traverse the area where Harvard now is located. The right-of-way identified skirted a triangle of hilly land which extended from the south shore of Lake Geneva, with the apex of that triangle pointing directly at Harvard.

Railroad construction practices and locomotive technology precluded the construction of a line from Genoa City through Lawrence, and Ayer was smart enough to understand that. Furthermore, Ayer's inside knowledge about the two railroads' plans served him very well as he worked with Amos Page and Otis Eastman to plat Harvard in November 1856. By that time (1855) the Fond du Lac line already was running trains through the area on the way to Janesville, Wis.

The Kenosha line, called the "Kenosha, Rockford and Rock Island Railroad," finally began running trains through Harvard by late 1859. Earlier that year in June, both the Chicago, St. Paul and Fond du Lac and the Kenosha, Rockford and Rock Island railroads were sold to the Ogden group and were reorganized as the Chicago and North Western Railway Co. It was obvious that, with both lines crossing at Harvard, the new railroad's facilities would be built in Harvard and not in Lawrence.

Harvard would grow. Lawrence, like some western gold mine boom-or-bust berg, would fade away as a commercial center.

While the citizens of Lawrence in the early 1850s still harbored dreams of prosperity, the millpond west of town was expanded. Creighton Ruggles, who had been a construction foreman on the Fond du Lac line northwest of Woodstock, settled in Lawrence after the construction was completed. He became the first station agent in Lawrence serving until 1886 when his son, George, assumed those duties.

Rutger Bigsby, a son of Lawrence, was appointed postmaster of the community.

By 1860 a school had been constructed at Kasson and Oak Grove roads. About 40 students attended Lawrence School in 1860. A teacher there in 1860 was Caroline Allen. A Baptist church also graced the community, probably Benjamin Holton. It also was used for a time as the "Lawrence Academy."

Neither original building survives today. The local Lawrence grade school closed in 1948 and became a private home.

The 1860 federal census of Lawrence shows that a hotel run by Elizah Lovelace was in business. William Boyd was a well known blacksmith there while L. J. Shipper set himself up as a watchmaker. Charles Beebe was a hatter and James Fisher offered tailoring services. Four dry goods stores, as

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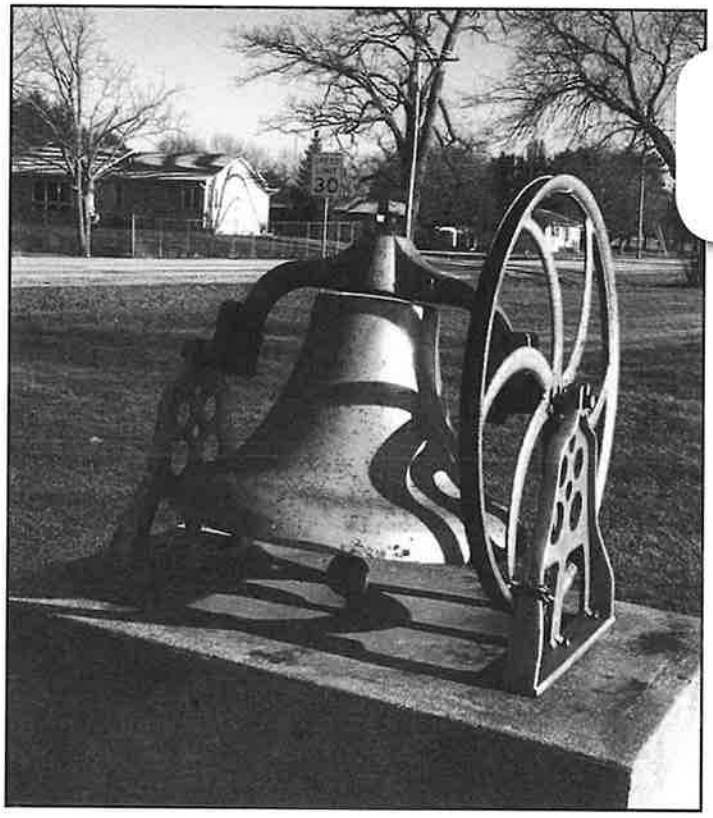

The Lawrence School bell, pictured here at its former location in front of Jones Packing Co. (22701 Oak Grove Road), was relocated to the Greater Harvard Area Historical Society Museum on Hart Street. "We have the school bell in our foyer and actually allow the kids to ring it ... ONCE!," volunteer Holly Haupt said.

well as a tobacco shop, confectioner and milliner served area residents. A milk station was set up by the depot along with a stockyard. Lawrence even boasted a full time physician, Dr. Benjamin Wade.

More than 240 individuals lived in Lawrence, according to the 1860 census.

But with the siting of the railroad's facilities in Harvard, the demise of Lawrence was inevitable. Some houses actually were disassembled, moved to Harvard and rebuilt. Even the acclaimed Dr. Wade moved his practice to Harvard. While the local population in 1870 remained as it was in 1860, the population in Harvard grew substantially.

A massive rainstorm in mid-September 1875 brought calamity to Lawrence. Unbeknown to either Agent Ruggles or the train crew of an oncoming passenger train, the much swollen Piskasaw Creek had undermined the bridge supports. across. However, the Harvard Herald reported the remaining cars did not fair as well.

The bridge's collapse hurdled the "tender, baggage and express cars, and one passenger car into the surging tide ... grinding them almost instantly into fragments."

Four people were killed in the wreck with a dozen others injured. It says something about the demise of Lawrence that the injured were taken to the Ayer Hotel in Harvard to be looked after by Dr. Wade.

Only three businesses in Lawrence made the 1877 Directory of McHenry County: J. L. Anderson, a commission merchant [grain dealer]; William Boyd, blacksmith; and Herbert Page, a confectioner. Anderson, by 1880, had become a piano teacher and, later, a farmer. He is buried in the Big Foot Cemetery, as is William Boyd.

Another disaster struck Lawrence in May 1883 when a large tornado swept across McHenry County from the southwest. Chemung, Lawrence and Alden were all hit. In Lawrence, the railroad depot and other buildings in the community were destroyed, and a farm laborer was killed. The one still-functioning store in Lawrence that year, a general store carrying hardware, groceries and drugs owned by Samuel Clark, was not touched.

An April 1890 map of Lawrence, found in the archives of the Chicago and North Western Historical Society, shows that Creighton Ruggles operated a warehouse by the tracks and the community's stockyard and milk platform also were being served by the railroad. Both the warehouse and milk platform were gone before 1902.

The village was such a quiet place that, in June 1897, the Harvard Herald reported that seven houses in the community were burglarized during one day in daylight. The paper called the event "a perfect carnival of crime."

No one was apprehended, as there was no police department in the unincorporated town.

With the advent of rural free delivery, the post office at Lawrence was deemed to be unnecessary and closed in February 1903. The rebuilt C&NW train station was closed by the railroad in February 1919. It's last agent, Joe Wozniewski, continued to live in Chemung Township until his death in 1966.

With the withdrawal of railroad service from Lawrence the community descended into quiet anonymity – which most of its residents didn't particularly mind. Trains still passed, albeit quickly, through Lawrence. Some fast streamliners raised dust or snowflakes as they slid through on their way to Madison or St. Paul, but those too stopped running in the late 1960s. Numerous freight trains did still rumble through the community without stopping on their way toward servicing the Janesville area – especially the General Motors plant.

The Chicago Tribune on Oct. 27, 1966, characterized Lawrence as "just another Illinois ghost town whose demise came at the turn of the century."

Today, Lawrence is not quite a ghost town. Dozens of small houses exist within the original town and along Oak Grove Road, now the community's main street. Two businesses still exist there – Jones Packing Co. and a small, friendly tavern inviting passersby with a flag advertising "slots." Even trains are rarely seen on the line through Lawrence, since the automotive plant in Janesville closed a few years back.

Only occasional local freights working between Janesville and Crystal Lake polish the rails. Sometimes, long strings of grain cars pass through town, the squeal of wheel flange on steel rail perhaps reminding those who remember such things of what might have been. ◆

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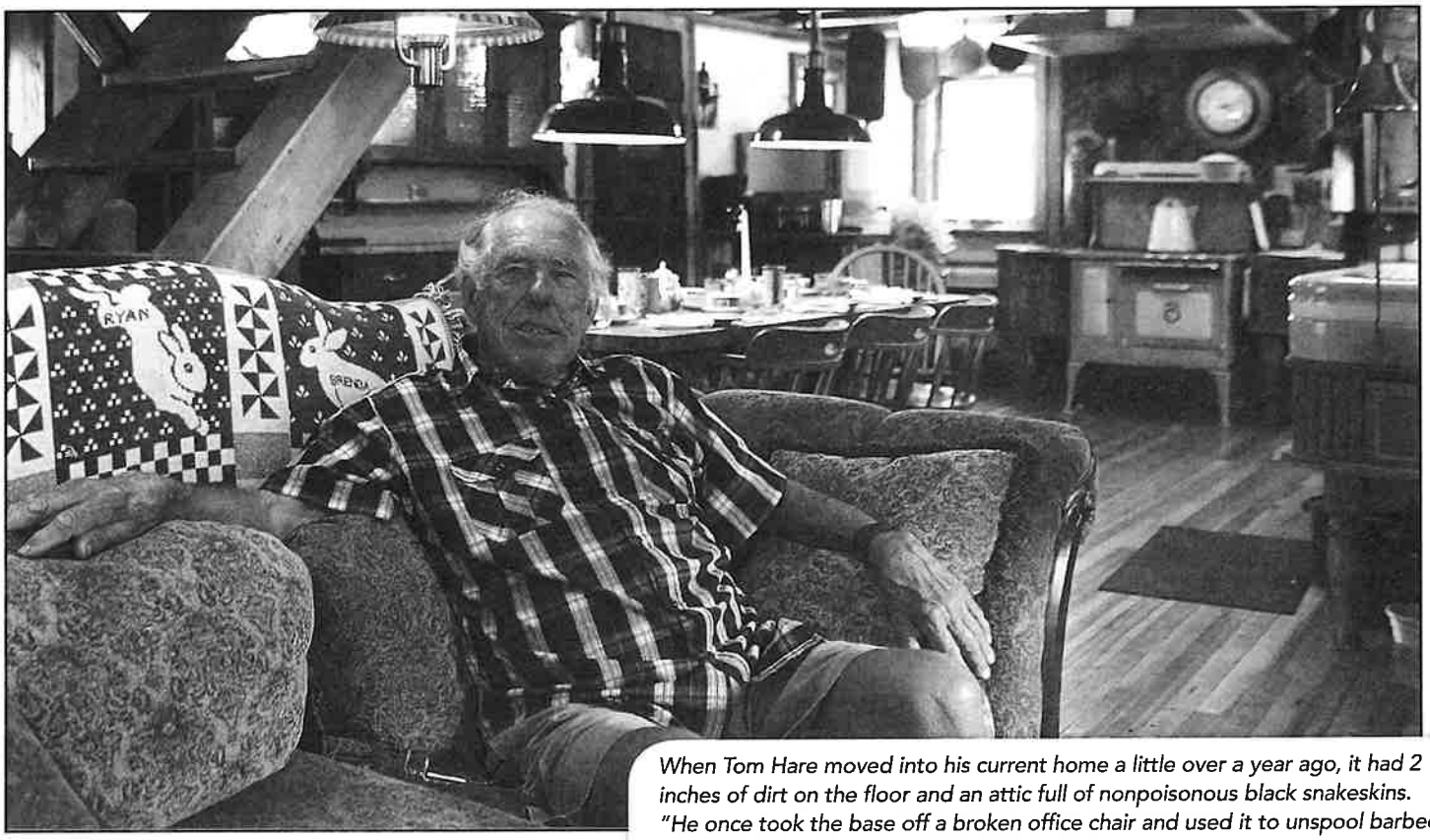

When Tom Hare moved into his current home a little over a year ago, it had 2 inches of dirt on the floor and an attic full of nonpoisonous black snakeskins. "He once took the base off a broken office chair and used it to unspool barbed wire," daughter Ryan Schmidt said. "He finds uses for all of these broken, random things. That's genius."

Photos by Angeli Wright, courtesy of the Asheville Citizen-Times

"I took off the first two layers and used that wood inside as trim, and left the third. It was perfect. The last time it saw daylight was in 1903."

Other structural projects included:

• He removed the interior bead board throughout the whole house and insulated. Hare also opened up the ceiling and added two staircases to separate loft bedrooms. It added natural light and created an airy feel.

• Floors and ceilings in the living room were redone with heart pine salvaged from Spring Creek School, built in the 1920s and abandoned in the 1970s. The project was accelerated when 10 cattle that Hare left to graze on the property got inside the house and "tore it up."

"This wood is hard pine," he said. "It's quarter-sawn like a bowling alley. It won't wear out."

Hare then set about outfitting it with items he bought from the nearby ReStore or from estate sales. He crafted plant hangers from a reconstituted New Holland hay rake and he found a gas-powered Maytag washing machine, with a hit-and-miss motor you start with a kick peddle ... like the motorcycles Hare used to race.

"It not only washes clothes, but you can take off the agitator, put in a 3 ½-gallon pot and make butter," Hare said with a laugh. "You wash the tablecloths, churn butter for the corn roast, and then unbolt the wringer and grind up meat for the barbecue. Then afterwards, reattach the butter churn and make ice cream. This is 1920s' technology, and I can't get a telephone to work here!"

Hare was born in 1942 on the family farm that now is on land occupied by Nick's Pizza and many other small businesses. Tom's mother, Inez, was tired of the farm and the dusty gravel thoroughfare that is now Virginia Road, and wanted to move to town. Tom's dad, Len, found an old, Civil War-era farmhouse with barn on Eagle Street. Tom's father took on the job of remodeling the old barn, built in the 1830s, into the new family home.

Growing up at 523 Eagle St., Hare attended Central School, now named Husmann Elementary, then fifth and sixth grades at the newly built South School. His teacher was John Husmann. He later attended Crystal Lake Community High School and was part of the famous graduating class of 1961. (Famous you ask? Check out the trophy case at Crystal Lake Central High School.)

Hare did not exceed in sports, nor was he an academic. His senior picture in the '61 yearbook was not framed with a list of clubs he belonged to or teams he played on. But seemed to get along with everyone – athletes, band kids, the academics, farm kids, "hoods" and classmates from more affluent families.

He was accepted by all and a friend to everyone. But his true "love" was his car.

"Every guy in high school wanted a car and a girlfriend," Hare said. "I didn't have money for both, so I bought a 1940 Ford coupe in my junior year."

After high school he attended Trinidad Junior College Trade School in Trinidad, Colo. Nationally known for its gunsmithing and automobile technician classes, it seemed a perfect fit for this self-proclaimed "gearhead" who aspired to become an automobile engineer.

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Homesick for Illinois, he transferred to Bradley University in Peoria. However, the required math proved too challenging. He dropped out of college two years later and arrived home to face an angry father second-guessing his decision to spend $1,200 a year on tuition. He was told him to get a job – immediately.

The only jobs Hare ever had was milking cows as a 16-year-old at a farm off Ackman Road and working for a house- wiring company known as Buzzy Bee Electric. He ended up cutting grass and plowing the parking lot for $6.25 an hour at American Can Co. in Barrington. But when the snowplow broke down, Tom put his mechanical and electrical acumen to work. After fixing the part in the plant's large machine shop, the maintenance supervisor offered Hare a job as an apprentice electrician.

"I have been fooling around with that stuff all my life," Hare said. " But now I was able to work inside with all of the electricians, plumbers, painters and the huge engineering department for the next nine years. That is where I got my real practical education."

When business began to slow, Hare went to work for Hughes & Son Signs off Route 176 in Crystal Lake. He worked there for a year before starting his own company, Sahara Sandblasting and Painting. After 20 years of this "unhealthy" job, he had an itch to blaze new trails.

"I've known him my whole life and I still have no idea what makes him tick," said daughter Ryan Schmidt, a seventh-grade teacher at Northwood Elementary in Woodstock who lives in Walworth, Wis. "I tell my students story about him; the imagination required to come up with the planning. No blueprints or measurements are written down. It's all in his head."

Hare has two other daughters – Brenda Kowalski, a McHenry resident who teaches at Valley View Elementary, and Karen Roux of St. Petersburg, Fla.

He took a summer vacation with two of his daughters and his new gal, Judie Hansen. They traveled east and then south, eventually stumbling on Madison County North Carolina – 27 miles from Asheville and 15 miles from the Tennessee border. In 1992 they bought 98 acres in the Appalachian Mountains.

"We found a place that has a perfect climate and no mosquitoes. And the hurricanes don't bother us," Hare said. "Judie was burned out after 30 years of nursing. I was tired of northern Illinois' cold and the high cost of living."

Hare left his home of 50 years on Eagle Street, later selling it in 2002 and buying a second parcel – this time 89 acres – next door to his first farm in Madison County. The move was accomplished with a 1969, modified Ford 16-foot flatbed truck he bought from his brother.

"I made 50 trips just bringing – I hate to say it – junk down to North Carolina," Hare said. "I have the picker, junkman disease and it's not curable."

The structures on each farm required a lot of TLC. The house and all the farm buildings on the 98-acre farm were in poor shape and the access road required a lot of work. Hare put his three years of experience driving a truck for Parish Paving in Crystal Lake in the early '90s, to immediate use.

"Bud Parish taught me how to make water run the right way," he said. "That's important in the mountains."

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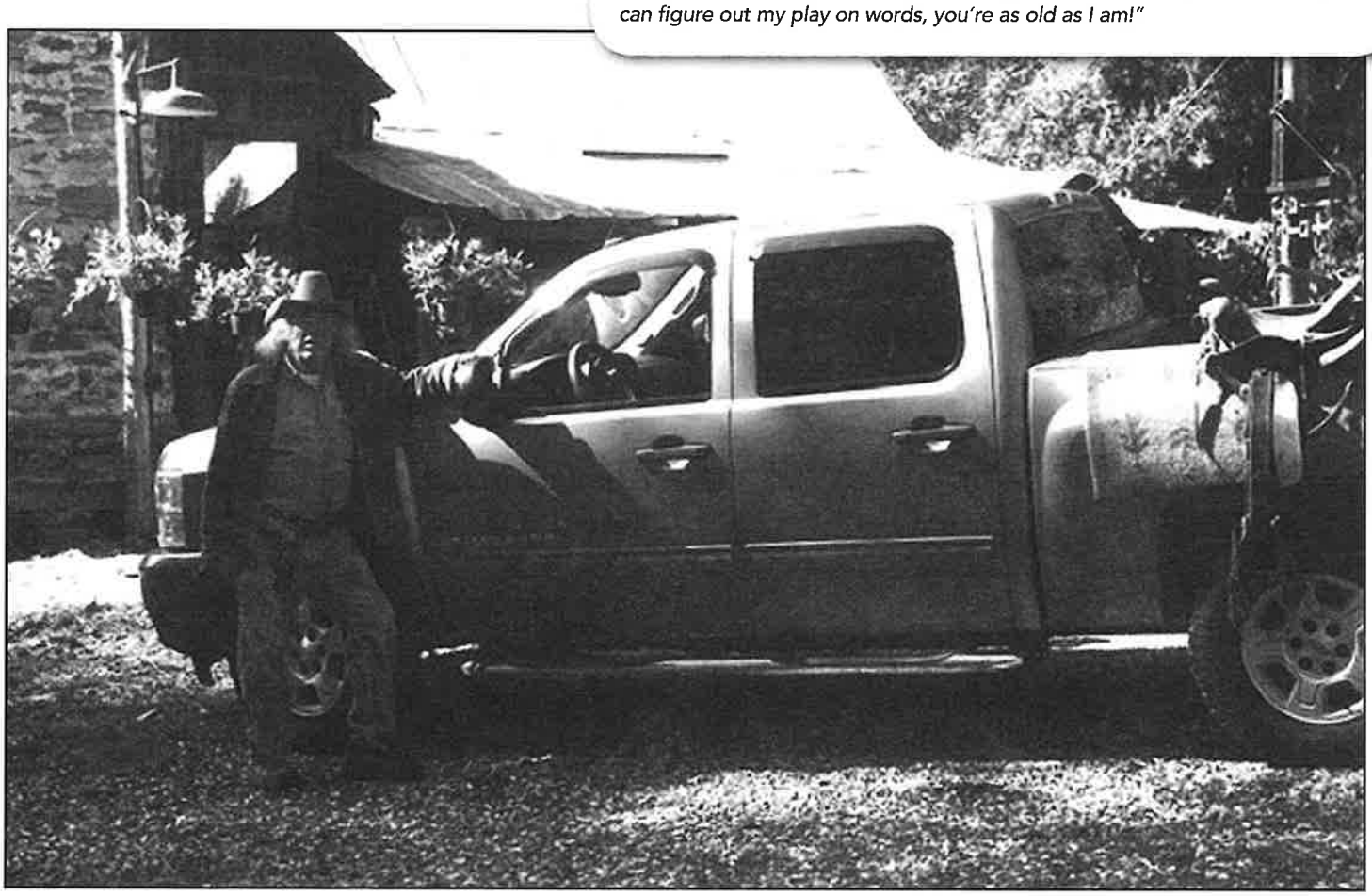
Tom Hare bought this truck one month ago. "I call her Silver," he said. "If you can figure out my play on words, you're as old as I am!"



Hare bought a used Bobcat and dug a septic field. He then bought a used "sawmill," powered by a Volkswagen motor so they could fashion their own lumber from the extensive stands of chestnut and cherry trees.

"Every day is a MacGyver day around here," Hare said. "I'm 30 miles from town and you have to make it work with what you have."

Property taxes amounted to a little less than $900 a year and the couple got everything they wanted: a creek for water, logs for heat, an abundance of rock to build walls and fireplaces. After clearing one of the rock-infested pastures, they accumulated 60 tons of boulders – sold to a landscaping company in Asheville. Within two weeks, Hare started a new business that lasted until around 2001.

"The economy started to dip and we couldn't find anyone dumb enough to buy rocks anymore, " Hare said. "But then a good thing happened. Part of the old homestead (built in the 1800s) on the farm was being used for junk storage. We had an idea to turn it into a vacation cabin. ... We took the building, which was 12 feet wide and 28 feet long, and made it twice as wide so we could accommodate another story."

Briar Rose Farm (www.briarrosefarm.com) vacation retreat was born. They soon had a second cabin on that property and added a third on the parcel next door.

Judie moved north to be closer to her family. She is also finally able to travel, which she was not able to do while living in North Carolina. Tom has moved off the original farm he and Judie had bought in 1992, and has been at the Hare farm for 13 months. He is happily living his third life chapter at the age of 76.

He still has free heat and water, and while the taxes have gone up from $430 to $490 for the year, he can still turn left anytime he wants. ◆

New Members

The Backdrop, Woodstock
Dobbe Marketing & PR, Crystal Lake Walter Boettcher, McHenry
Annette Lyttle, The Villages, FL
Robert Wagner, Crystal Lake
Ruth Greenlee, Doniphan, MO
Harry Bissinger, Philadelphia, PA
Sue Garcia, Woodstock
Howard Hoyt, Huntley
Margaret Gardner, Mundelein
David Krieg, Harvard
Patrick Arnold, McHenry
Peter Barberie, Philadelphia, PA
Crystal Lake Public Library, Crystal Lake
The David Miller Family, Marengo
Harvard Historical Society, Harvard
Don and Toni Bellm, Huntley
Cindy Gardner, Richmond
Cary Area Public Library, Cary
Patricia Veilleux, Woodstock
Cheryl Fruchtman, Dewey Beach, DE
Beth Parsons, Arlington Heights
Rick & Kitt Cook, Algonquin
Virginia Riggins, Normal
Katie Homuth, Woodstock
James & Cheryl Kelly, McHenry
Debra Nelson, Oakwood Hils
Joann Deason Knaack, Cary
Jay Walkington, Ringwood
Sandy Wilkin, Wonder Lake
Jeff Varda, McHenry

DeFiore
FUNERAL & CREMATION SERVICE

Anna L. Sheridan – the lady 'copper' from Woodstock, a Chicago celebrity

By SUE DOBBE-LEAHY

Anna Louise Lyons Schaumann Dolan Sheridan lived an extraordinary life for any person in any era. But there is something else that really sets her apart. She is my great-grandmother.

She was born Feb. 22, 1872, on the Lyons family farm, located at the corner of Routes 176 and 47 in Woodstock. Her parents were Irish-born from County Mayo. They had married in 1855 in London and immigrated to the United States in 1856.

Anna was among the youngest of Miles and Ellen Clark Lyons' 14 children. Anna was a bright, articulate child who told her father that she wanted to be a doctor. Her father replied that women did not become doctors. Miles Lyons was an educated and cultured man who had worked in London for an art dealer. Ellen Clark had worked for an opera singer. Raising their children, both parents demonstrated their passion for learning. Evenings on the farm would find Miles reading to his children. Two of his favorite books were the Bible and Shakespeare.

Both of her parents died about a year apart in Chicago. Ellen passed on April 3, 1900, at age 65. Miles died on May 16, 1901, at the age of 67.

At the age of 20, Anna left the farm and moved to Chicago during the 1893 World's Fair. She met and fell in love with Christopher Schaumann. They were married that year. Together, with Christopher's brother, they owned a tavern at 141 N. Sacramento Ave. on Chicago's west side. One year later, on Aug. 30, 1894, their daughter (my grandmother) Eleanor Christel Schaumann was born.

I've been collecting information from family documents and recently received a scrapbook of newspaper articles. There are a couple hundred and all in fragile condition. Most are from 1920-1930s when she was a police officer and passed the bar. Once she began practicing law, she worked from her home and did not generate much press coverage. Then in 1962, she turned 90 and there was a big party for her which included several police and judicial officials. My grandmother, Eleanor Christel Schaumann, was born 1894 and died 1933 – leaving behind five children and her husband, Robert C. Kubicek. My father, Robert C. Kubicek, and his siblings were Anna's only grandchildren. Yet the family lives on. My dad had 12 children. His sisters – Eleanor, Joan and Rosalie – had six, four and six children, respectively. The more I read about Anna, the more impressed I am with her faith and focus on helping others. She experienced many losses yet pushed on with a confidence and charm that inspired others. She was only 5-foot-2, yet was a giant in the lives of those who knew her.

– Sue Dobbe-Leahy

On Christmas Day 1894, Christopher died from a weak heart. Anna was devastated. She continued to work with her brother-in-law as co-owner of the tavern.

Anna's sister, Mary Jane, was married to James Dolan. In 1896, Anna married her brother-in-law's cousin – also named James Dolan. Anna and Dolan had a son, Alfred, born in 1897.

The Spanish American War broke out in April 1898. Anna's husband left Chicago for Mexico to fight with Teddy

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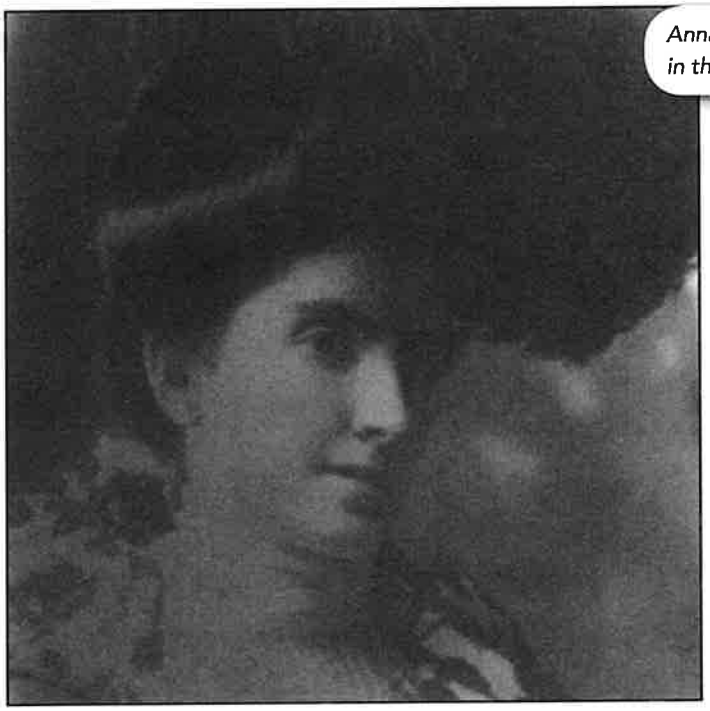

Anna L. Lyons Schaumann is pictured in this 1893 wedding photo.

Roosevelt's Rough Riders. When the war ended in August of 1898, Dolan did not return. Anna was notified he had been wounded and died. She was widowed twice and had two small children.

Still in the tavern business, lovely Anna caught the attention of liquor purveyor Harry T. Sheridan. Sheridan was 21 years Anna's senior, but she found this consummate salesman funny and charming. They married in 1901. Eleanor Christel was 7 years old and Albert was 4. Soon, little red-haired Mary Louise Sheridan joined the family in 1902. Their home was a sturdy brownstone on Lake Shore Drive. Anna had china, crystal and even silverware for her dining table.

Cooking proved a comfort to Anna. She loved the ritual of serving delicious meals. Each day Anna cooked for her family or made gifts of food for friends. Anna's recipe repertoire was diverse and her kitchen became a destination for folks to sit and enjoy coffee, tea, butterhorns (crescent rolls), and fancy cakes. She experimented with new foods, being the first in the neighborhood to serve Baked Alaska.

Anna's life was finally very good.

Unfortunately, Sheridan's life was not so good. In 1908 the couple's property was sold for $2,500, due to a lien by Patrick O' Donnell. It was difficult to recover from the impact of the loss. Harry died in 1910. The loss was tragic, made worse when Anna learned Harry left her deep in debt. The sheriff's agent came to the door of her Lake Shore Drive brownstone with an order for her to leave the premises, including all the silver, china and crystal.

Anna was thrice widowed, bankrupt and not yet 40 years old.

At the encouragement of a friend, Anna took a job as a shop girl at Marshall Fields. Each day she donned the shirtwaist black and white uniform. Bright and hard-working, Anna was frustrated by the limited opportunities and income with her shop position.

Another loss occurred in Anna's life. Alfred died in 1912 at age of 14 from an abscessed ear infection. He is buried beneath the Sheridan/Kubicek headstone in Mount Carmel Cemetery, Chicago.

In the year 1914, there were rumblings of war in Europe. Women were seeking the vote. The automobile was gaining acceptance. Prohibition was a passion dividing the country; it was clear the tavern was not the place to make money. Anna needed a solid job. She learned the city of Chicago was hiring the first women police officers and applied.

Mrs. Anna L. Sheridan was selected in 1914 as one of the first woman officers on the Chicago police force. After three years, she was promoted to the juvenile court, where she gained recognition for her manner of handling delinquency cases. She believed that children were not bad but they got into mischief because they were desperate, seeking something to do or encouraged by others. In later years, Anna would author white papers reporting on her experience in Juvenile Court that were valued by the judicial leadership for

Annie Sheridan (right) was among those female police officers tasked with measuring the hem length of swimsuits in 1920.

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Anna L. Sheridan (right), who retired as a policewoman in Chicago after 20 years, celebrates with her original colleagues on the force – circa 1934.

their common sense and candor.

For 20 years, Anna served Chicago as police officer – throughout World War I and the Roaring Twenties, Prohibition and the Great Depression. Her name and photo were frequently in the Chicago newspapers during the two decades. Articles were written about her many adventures and achievements.

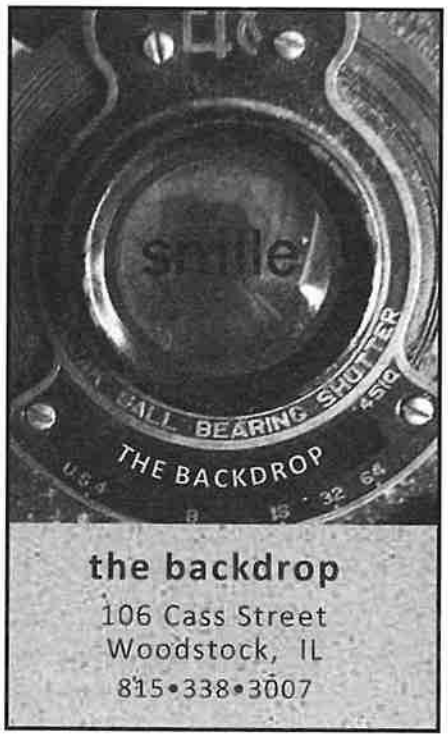
The March 2, 1923, edition of the Chicago Daily News featured a be-speckled Anna in a cloche hat and fur-collared jacket. Her photo is among 10 images – nine of them of men – recognizing their pistol sharpshooting skills. Anna was the winner of the policewomen's match. Later contests would pit her against the male officers.

Anna was known for her pistol marksmanship, as she could outshoot almost every man on the force. One competition resulted in Anna defeating 130 men at a pistol match by scoring 13 bulls-eyes out of 15 attempts. She was 60-years old at the time and known as a "dead-eye".

Unfortunately, steady employment and popularity does not preclude someone from experiencing personal tragedy. In 1933, Anna's daughter, Eleanor Christel died. She had married Robert Kubicek in 1924 and had five children. My father, Robert C. Kubicek was 5-years old and the only boy. Anna became a steady force in the lives of her grandchildren, helping their father with caregiving and finances.

As she neared retirement age on the police force, Anna was planning a busy future. Her years of service as a policewoman in the state's attorney's office inspired her to apply to DePaul University Law School. In 1924, 10 years into her police job, she completed a law degree with academic scores that exceeded any previous student at the university. She passed the bar in 1924 but did not begin practicing law until she retired from the police force in 1934.

At the age of 62, Anna retired from her police career and began practicing law from her May Street home. Her solo practice helped neighbors, family members and even the local Catholic parish. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren filled her evenings and weekends. She lived with her granddaughter Mary Anna Kubicek and kept a pistol handy in her purse until she died in 1963. ◆



Nana & Christmas

By SUE DOBBE-LEAHY

Christmas is the time for visiting grandmothers and Nana was my great-grandmother, and so worthy of the trip.

Father and Mother (truly, it is what we called them) bundled up the five of us for a trip to Nana's house on the north side of Chicago. The home was small, with lots of dark wood and delicious smells.

Still a fantastic cook, baker and hostess at the age of 90, Nana is my father's mother's mother. His mother died in 1933, when he was a child. Nana was instrumental in raising him and his four sisters. All four sisters are at Nana's this Christmas day, three with their respective broods.

Aunt MaryAnna is the single sister (not ever referred to as a "spinster"). She worked for the Internal Revenue Service in some important capacity and lived with Nana. Both are women of historic stature and had a remarkable impact on the world. To me, at 5 years old, they were nice to me and the dinners were always fun.

Nana was known to most people as Mrs. Anna L. Sheridan. Born on a farm in Woodstock in 1872, she became one of Chicago's first policewomen and later an accomplished lawyer. Passing the Illinois Bar at age 52, she continued to serve as a policewoman for a decade. She retired from the police force at 62 in 1934 and began practicing law from the parlor of her May Street home.

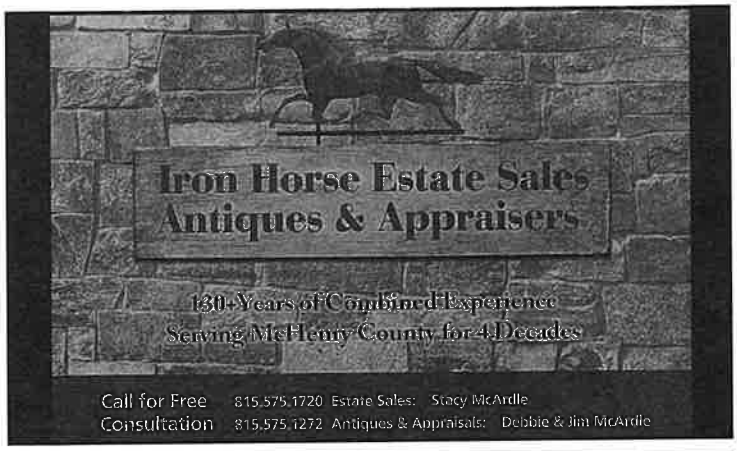
Her experience as a policewoman, and specifically as a special representative to the state's attorney's office, provided an expansive network of contacts to serve the community, her local Catholic Church, family and friends. After 15 years as an attorney, Anna L. Sheridan retired. She was 77 years old.

Once I have a chance to sort through all of the more than 200 newspaper, more details will follow. As I read the Chicago newspaper clippings of 1920-1935, there is unrest, police problems, violence, political upheaval, prohibition, depression, frustration. What I found remarkable about my reading was there were also stories of people helping others, being strong in the face of tragedy and caring for their brethren.

But back then my knowledge was limited to Nana's role in our family. She was really, really old – almost 90, at my first recollection. At that time she was still full of smiles and twinkly eyes, she took time to hug and kiss every great-grandchild.

When I visited her home in 1961, she was revered in our family for her cooking, wisdom and loving, positive personality. I did not know what a force and influence she was in her world. I am still finding out the details.

I recommend to you during this holiday season: Ask a loved one – especially those up in years – about his or her history. You will be surprised and inspired. ◆



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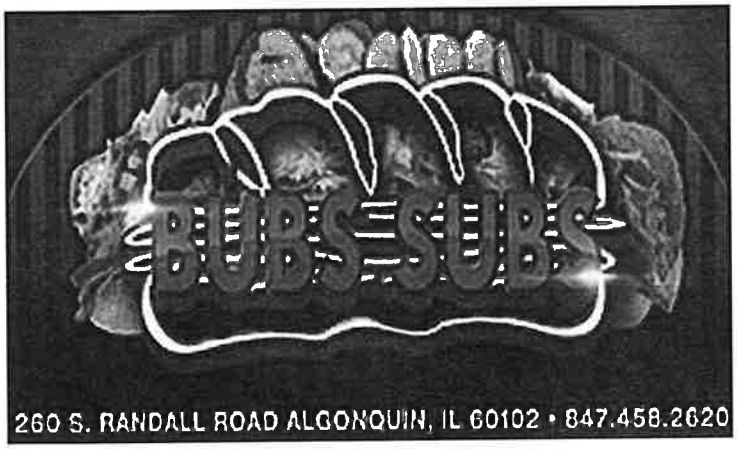

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Hujer brings enthusiasm, educational acumen to Society

NAME: Michelle Hujer
AGE: 28
TOWN WHERE I LIVE NOW: Bensenville
HOMETOWN: Buffalo Grove
FAMILY (parents/siblings): Dad, Robert Hujer; Partner in Crime, Nathan Hillison
EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree in English from Ripon College in Ripon, Wis. Minors in history and dramatic literature.
FAVORITE MOVIE: Austenland
LAST CD BOUGHT: Moody Blues (for my dad)
THIN CRUST OR DEEP-DISH PIZZA? Deep dish (no cheese)
KETCHUP OR MUSTARD ON A HOT DOG: Both
STARBUCKS OR DUNKIN DONUTS COFFEE: Both
FUNNY/INTERESTING THING PEOPLE TYPICALLY DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU: I really wanted to be a writer in college and during my classes when I should have been taking notes, I was writing a novel, multiple screenplays, songs, poems and even a few one-acts.

TRACER: What is your role with the McHenry County Historical Society?
HUJER: Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator.

TRACER: How long have you been here?
HUJER: Since August 20.

TRACER: What prompted you to choose this organization?
HUJER: I love working in museums *(former Raupp Museum educator in Buffalo Grove)* and it seemed like a great place to work.

TRACER: Why history? What is it about this career that trips your trigger?
HUJER: I like hearing people's stories and knowing their experiences through the past. It's interesting to hear about what others have experienced. I think it's a human interaction type of thing. You can relate to someone from the 1800s, even though are completely different in a million ways.

TRACER: What is the best part of working at the museum?
HUJER: The amazing people I get to work with.

TRACER: What are your long-term goals?
HUJER: To be a museum director.

TRACER: How did you get to where you are today?
HUJER: Lots of support and my stubbornness to never give up.

TRACER: Do you have a mentor? If so, who, and describe how he/she influenced you.
HUJER: I have quite a few. The first is Sandy Denninger, who was the first person to ever give me a job in the museum field. She taught me so much and helped me realize that this was the right career for me. She was the curator at the Elk Grove Historical Museum in Elk Grove Village, and I will always think of her as my first museum mentor and friend in the field.

Second is Angela Houghton, curator at the Itasca Depot Museum. She not only is a mentor to me but also a big sister. She has helped me every step of the way in the museum world and has always pushed me to be better. Her background in the field has inspired me and her patience and kindness have helped me be a better person.

Other people who have inspired me, and made me love this career even more, are: Lauren Szady, from the Arlington Heights Historical Museum, Johnathan Sebastian of Fischer Farms in Bensenville, Stephanie Moyer from Cantigny Park in Wheaton and three from the Elk Grove Historical Museum – Audrey Ko, Michael Stachnik and Ryan Lendy. ◆

Autumn Mystery Photo

Terese M. Thompson and Peggy Hart knew that this building, located at 344 Fremont St. in Woodstock, is the Cherry Tree Inn.

However, it originally was the home of noted attorney and judge Charles P. Barnes. A local newspaper described the home in 1901 as being "one of the most elaborate and one of the most beautiful residences in Woodstock." The house was home to all three of Barnes' wives. Rumors abounded at the time about his relationships, as well as his involvement with the "wet" side of Prohibition activities in the 1920s and 1930s.

The house is well known to those who have seen the movie "Groundhog Day." The lead character in the movie, played by Bill Murray, was often seen at the front of the house which was the character's recurring residence. It is now known as the Cherry Tree Inn Bed & Breakfast.

Born on what would become Valentine's Day in 1862, Barnes died in Woodstock on June 11, 1950, and is buried in the Oakland Cemetery.

Winter Mystery Photo

Can you identify what type of building this is and the community it served (hint)?

Nobody said this was going to be easy!

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New at the Library...

- Burial places of veterans in Crystal Lake, Ill.
- Union School yearbook, presented by the graduating eighth-grade class of 1952-53. The building currently houses the McHenry County Historical Society.
- Crystal Lake American Legion Auxiliary ledger, August 2002-July 2009.
- American Legion Auxiliary Unit Handbook of the American Legion Auxiliary, revised 1979.
- *More than 200,000 Country Schools: A Guide for Research, Preservation and Education* by Lucy Townsend. League City, Texas: Country School Association of America, circa 2016.
- Crystal Lake American Legion Auxiliary guest register, McHenry County Council ALA, from Aug. 19, 1990, Marengo, IL.
- Crystal Lake American Legion Auxiliary photo album, 1935-1986.
- Autograph books: Harry O'Cock, Marengo, IL
- Funeral register: Harry O'Cock, Marengo, IL
- Charles Albanese execution video, Discovery Channel, February 1997.
- Charles Albanese execution video, Fox News, Sept. 19, 1995, Dana Plecko, reporter.
- *Beckley-Cardy Buyer's Guide of School Equipment and Supplies*, 1944-45; 1945-46.
- Flanagan's Teacher's Catalog, 1942-46.
- McHenry County Illinois Historical Society Tracer subject index, volumes 1-2.